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AGAINST THE ANNEXATION OF THE
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JOHN L. MITCHELL,
OF WISCONSIN,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Tuesday, June 21, 1898.



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SPEECH
OF
HON. JOHN L. MITCHELL.

The Senate having under consideration the joint resolution (H. Res. 259) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States—

Mr. MITCHELL said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: Just before the outbreak of the present war it was loudly claimed by the advocates of Hawaiian annexation that a majority of the people of this country were with them. If this was really the condition, it came through feeding the people on fine phrases until there was no room left for the hard food of truth. They were not convinced by argument. They had been carried away by catch-words: "Manifest destiny," "the logic of events," "now is the golden hour," "the mastery of the Pacific." The simile of "ripe fruit falling into the lap" has been a favorite with many, unmindful of the warning of the poet in the matter of sea fruit:

The Dead Sea fruit that tempts the eye
But turns to ashes on the lips.

The serious study of public questions is a good deal like work. It is easier to float gayly along on an intoxicating tide of sentimental gush.

And now the Philippines be upon us. The nation, shorn of its judgment, is led captive by its emotions. We are to establish ourselves permanently in the far East, and must have a coaling station in mid-Pacific as a basis for aggressive action. Under a passing stress of war we are to be pressed into taking a first step in imperialism—a policy which may benefit the favored few, but to the ordinary mortal it means the path to the barracks or possibly the poorhouse. All this at the precise time when we should avoid compromising ventures. Europe already questions our sincerity in the declaration touching Cuba. The seizure of Hawaii

would remove any doubt as to our all-round land-grabbing intentions. Giving no heed to the war whoop, we should consider this subject dispassionately.

Annexation might help Hawaii itself. But our duty requires us to look at this question from a purely selfish standpoint. Unless this measure is clearly to the advantage of the United States, we must cast it out.

While annexation ought not to be permitted without a full and free expression on the part of the Hawaiians, still it is not material whether the Hawaiian population, in mass or in any proportion, desire annexation or not. It is for them to show a clean bill of political health as a condition precedent to admission. The men in the bowels of the wooden horse were anxious to enter Troy, but they proved undesirable citizens after they were let in. Are we bound to admit to our domestic circle every wanderer who raps at our door? Before we enter into a business partnership we scrutinize. Before entering into a political partnership we should be more careful still, for the bonds are more difficult to dissolve. We owe the Hawaiians much. In times past they have sent us bananas and we have returned them fleas and gunpowder. They have sent us pineapples and we have returned them muskets, mosquitoes, and the measles. There is an uncomfortable balance against us, but to demand annexation to square accounts is asking too much.

Putting aside all considerations of the constitutionality of this resolution and pinning ourselves down strictly to the question of expediency, are there any common-sense grounds for the acquisition of these islands? Will the diverse peoples which inhabit them bring a strengthening element to our body politic? Are they of sufficient commercial and strategic value to warrant a large outlay of money? I believe that all these questions may be safely answered in the negative.

The area of the islands is not extensive, a little over 6,000 square miles. Of this only about one-quarter is fit for cultivation. The interior of the islands is devoted to raising volcanoes. If the United States is in search of mountain property, they can not do better. But one would think that the "Rockies" ought to suffice in this line. A narrow strip along the shore, of intermittent fer-

tility, is devoted to raising cane—sugar cane. In the sea grow an abundance of fish and tidal waves. The climate is mild and equable. There is an inviting stanza that touches our sensibilities:

Come to this land of the sunset sea,
Where the year is wrapped in golden weather,
Where the months are strung on sunbeam threads
And clasped with roses and pinks together.

Nothing but sunbeams and flowers becomes monotonous to distraction. They cloy like a steady diet of sugar candy. For nine months of the year the wind is constantly in the northeast—no fitful breeze, but a steady blow; something between a zephyr and a typhoon. During the rest of the year, by way of compensation, it blows from the southwest.

In trying to take this Hawaiian rainbow apart, I have not confined my reading to the special pleas of the pamphleteers. From what appears to be an unprejudiced source, I quote words written some years ago, before sugar had become king, and before the importation of Mongolian and Portuguese laborers:

The Hawaiian Islands can hardly be regarded as a field for emigration. Farming, as we understand it, is unknown. The dearth of insectivorous birds seriously affects the cultivation of the soil. The narrow gorges, in which terraced "patched cultivation" is so successful, offers no temptations to a man with the world before him. The larger areas require labor, and labor is not to be had. Though wheat and other cereals mature, attacks of weevils prevent their storage, and all the grain and flour consumed is imported from California. Beef is plentiful and sells for enough to pay for cutting up the carcass. Cacao, cinnamon, and allspice are subject to an apparently ineradicable blight. The blight which has attacked the coffee shrub is so severe that the larger plantations have been dug up, and coffee is now raised by patch culture, mainly among the guava shrub which fringes the forest. Oranges suffer from blight also, and some of the finest groves have been cut down. Cotton suffers from the ravages of a caterpillar.

The mulberry tree, which, from its rapid growth, would be invaluable to silk growers, is covered with a black and white blight. Sheep are at present very successful, but in some localities the spread of the pestilent oat burr is depreciating the value of their wool. The forests, which are essential to the well-being of the island, are disappearing in some quarters, owing to the attacks of a grub as well as the ravages of cattle. Cocoanuts, bananas, yams, sweet potatoes, and kalo are free from blight, and so are potatoes and rice. While everyone can live abundantly and without the sweat of the brow, but few can make money, owing to the various forms of blight, the scarcity of labor, and the lack of a profitable market. Settlements are disappearing, valley lands are falling out of cultivation, and hilo grass and guava scrub are burying the traces of a former population.

In 1896 the total value of imports into Hawaii was about \$7,000,000. Of this the United States contributed a little less than \$5,000,000. This is a commerce in which other countries can not

compete with us, and no change in the political condition of the islands would deprive us of it. In 1896 there was exported of rice, \$195,000; bananas, \$125,000; hides, \$60,000; coffee, \$53,000. Leaving out sugar, these figures show the relative importance of the chief products of the islands and also the insignificance of the coffee crop.

The total value of exports for 1896 was \$15,515,000, of which sugar figures for \$14,932,000. With the exception of \$162 worth, all this sugar came to the United States. If the sugar imported into the United States had paid a duty of 2 cents a pound, some \$7,000,000 would have gone into the United States Treasury. Speaking roundly, in 1896, of the fifteen and a half million dollars of exports, but half a million was made up of products other than sugar. It is evident that sugar is supreme in Hawaii. All other industries are insignificant. In the production of sugar large capital is essential to pecuniary success. Some forty capitalists control the sugar industry of the islands. There were in their employ in 1896, 23,780 laborers. Of these, there were 1,615 Hawaiians, 2,268 Portuguese, 12,893 Japanese, 6,289 Chinese, 115 South Sea Islanders, and 600 of all other nationalities. About half of all these men are contract laborers, living under a condition of virtual chattel slavery, a condition that the present Republic has not seen fit to remedy.

These men are paid from \$12.50 to \$15 per month, without board. Practically the Mongolians produce the sugar of the islands. They work for wages that white men would not accept, and they suffer hardships and privations that white men could not endure. American laborers who may migrate to Hawaii in the hope of betterment, if they continue to exist at all, would rapidly degenerate. They would succumb to their surroundings, stained like the dyer's hand by the element it works in.

The Mongolian is essential to the profitable production of sugar. It is admitted that the undertaking would be a financial failure without him. Broadly speaking, sugar is all there is to the Hawaiian Islands commercially, and the Mongolian is all there is to sugar, except the big capitalist. The big capitalist is afraid of the abrogation of the present treaty; hence the annexation project, which is a clumsy cover for a mercenary scheme. Saccharine

trickles out all around it; the trail of sugar is over it all. It is quite time that this assertive commodity gave this Legislature a respite.

But lands, imports, exports, manufactures, money do not make a nation. It is men—men strong in their ability to toil, firm set in those civic virtues that alone make self-government possible. In the words of an eminent divine:

The greatness of America is in her democracy. America, as no other nation, honors manhood, consecrates its rights and gives it the freedom to develop its powers and satisfy its ambition. America is the nation of the people, and to become of the people of America it suffices to be man.

Do the inhabitants of Hawaii rise to the high requirements of American citizenship? In 1896 there were 109,020 inhabitants in the Hawaiian Islands. Of these there were 31,019 full-blooded Hawaiians, 8,435 part Hawaiians, 24,407 Japanese, 21,616 Chinese, 15,191 Portuguese, 2,266 Americans, and 1,538 subjects of Great Britain. From these figures it will be seen that the three important races, numerically, in the islands are the Hawaiians proper, the Mongolians, and the so-called Portuguese.

These three races figure 100,000 out of a population of 109,000. The Hawaiian is an insouciant, indolent creature. With him a longing for repose is a gift of nature. He is more inclined to aesthetics than to ethics. He delights in flowers that grow without cultivation, in listening to music, and in seeing other people dance. Intellectually and industrially he lags superfluous on the scene. After a century's contact with civilization his race has dwindled from 400,000 to 40,000. The white man has stamped out his religion, his traditions. His lands have slipped away from him. He no longer has a voice in the Government. It does not lie in human nature for him to be friendly to the white man, and he would prove a permanent menace to our Government.

The Mongolian—the gentle heathen—we are already acquainted with. Such a citizen is he that we have thought fit to deal with him after the Draconian method.

There was a provision in the treaty now withdrawn, which is tacked onto this resolution, seeking to prevent the Chinese now in Hawaii from removing to other parts of the United States in the event of annexation. In other words, persons safely within our borders and guiltless of any offense against our laws are forbid-

den from moving freely throughout our territory. I would like to be a Chinaman—not for a great while—just long enough to test this monstrous doctrine. It looks very much like a return to the days when the serfs were part and parcel of the soil.

The so-called Portuguese is a mixture of many bloods, and all inferior. He came from the Island of Madeira and not from Portugal. He is a degraded peon, without a single quality that goes to make up the acceptable American citizen.

Senators on this floor have lately taxed their ingenuity in framing bills to exclude from the United States the compatriots of Hofer, Kosciusko, Kossuth, and Garibaldi, and now they ask us to swallow at a gulp this variegated agglomeration of the fag-ends of humanity. But this unsavory population is not all that we will have to swallow. At the foot of an insurmountable cliff there juts out from the Island of Molokai a low-lying, narrow peninsula, girt about by the impassable ocean. On this strip of land are segregated some fourteen hundred lepers—doomed beings, who have shut to themselves the doors of their own sepulcher.

Stevenson writes from personal experience:

On landing on Molokai you behold the stairs crowded with abominable deformations of our common manhood, and find yourself in the midst of such a population as only now and then surrounds us in the horror of delirium. As we move on, every fourth face forms a blot upon the landscape. We visit the hospital and see the butt ends of human beings lying there almost unrecognizable, but still breathing, still thinking, still remembering. It is a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in. Here one breathes the atmosphere of affliction, disease, and physical disgrace.

Molokai is neglected by travelers. None of the gentlemen who recently went from Washington to Hawaii for investigation visited it. This is strange, because this leper colony is unique the world over. It is the most interesting point in the island, pathologically speaking. Leprosy is a mysterious disease, about which but two things are definitely known: It is not hereditary and it is contagious. Dr. Morrow, in the *North American Review*, writes:

That in addition to the lepers in Molokai there are probably two or three times as many at large in whom the disease is latent or in the incubative stage, yet none the less sure to develop. It is probable that with the relaxation of our strict regulations on the Pacific coast, which may be assumed would follow annexation, many lepers would, in their desire to escape Molokai, emigrate to this country. The principal danger would come from the establishment of more intimate commercial relations, the opening of new enterprises inviting capital and labor, and consequent thereon the influx of

Americans into the islands and their exposure to contact with the tainted population.

That such contact is not devoid of danger is evident from the number of foreigners who contract the disease. In the event of annexation it would be idle to think of confining leprosy to the islands, or rather excluding it from this country, by quarantine measures. In its earlier stage leprosy defies detection, and no system of quarantine has ever been devised which would exclude the importation of a disease so little manifest on ordinary inspection as leprosy; only the more advanced cases could be detected. There would seem to be no reasonable doubt that the annexation of Hawaii would create conditions favorable to the dissemination of the seeds of leprosy in this country. Experience shows that in all countries where leprosy has become epidemic its advance is insidious. It spreads slowly, and before the health authorities awaken to the realization of danger it has made such headway that its further progress can not be arrested. All of these facts should be carefully considered and their importance from a sanitary point of view carefully weighed by our legislative authorities before deciding upon the annexation of Hawaii with its leprous population.

Dr. Morrow estimates that more than 10 per cent of the Hawaiian race is affected with leprosy. Another writer puts it at 5 per cent of the total population. Of course accurate leper statistics are not to be obtained. The Hawaiian officials are dumb on this subject, and Government publications are significantly silent.

That portion of the President's annual message which treats of Hawaii is a feat in composition. How carefully he has lifted the English language over the rough spots—the many difficulties that beset this question. Out of verbal confusion rings one clear utterance:

Every consideration of dignity and honor requires the confirmation of the treaty.

Dignity is a matter of taste, and need not be discussed. If honor requires annexation, conversely those who oppose confirmation are lacking in the point of honor. This is a grave charge, but one which neither history nor the humanities will sustain. A handful of aliens have traded the natives out of their birthright, and we are asked in the name of honor to confirm their title. A few conspirators, aided by a United States minister, acting without specific authority, have overthrown the accepted, legitimate Government of the islands. They have substituted an oligarchy of their own, and now, in the name of honor, we are asked to stamp with our approval their proceedings. Since the advent of the white man every leaf in the history of Hawaii is either red with blood or black with intrigue and jobbery. In the name of honor we are asked to bind up these tarnished pages in the book of records of

this Republic. It is travesty to dress up this political manikin of the further seas in the garb of honor. It is a misfit, a waste of good material.

If annexation is to harden into fact, one of two things will happen: Either Hawaii will become a State, a rotten borough, with two representatives on this floor, or it will remain a Territory in perpetuity, a proconsulate, a condition repugnant to our institutions. If such a political programme is to prevail, our idea of manhood equality before the law is simply a passing show, a piece of theatrical machinery to be relegated to the "property room," never again to be trundled out upon the stage.

I am not here in a narrow spirit. I propose to legislate for the welfare of the whole nation. Still I can not refrain from asking myself this question: In the region of country from which I come, universal political contamination aside, what direct interest have the people in this mirage of the Pacific? That some Mercutio of ours may lay down his life in this masquerade of mock democracy is probable. That we will throw away good money in this venture is certain. Beyond these things, Hawaii will have no more existence for us than the Island of Monte Christo.

In his message the President implies that three-quarters of a century of American diplomacy has ripened into a necessity for annexation. I do not read history in that light. In 1842 President Tyler wrote:

Hawaii should be respected and all its rights strictly and conscientiously regarded. It is deemed not unfit to make the declaration that our Government seeks no peculiar advantages, no exclusive control over the Hawaiian Government, but is content with its independent existence, and anxiously wishes for its security and prosperity.

In 1843 Mr. Webster, as Secretary of State, entered into a treaty agreement with England and France to keep their hands off the Hawaiian Islands. He writes.

We seek no control over the Hawaiian Government, nor any undue influence whatever. Our only wish is that the integrity and independence of the Hawaiian territory may be scrupulously maintained.

In 1849 President Taylor said:

We desire that the islands may maintain their independence and that other nations may concur with us in this sentiment.

In 1850 Mr. Clayton, Secretary of State, agreed with this view.

On July 14, 1851, Mr. Webster wrote:

In acknowledging the independence of the islands and of the government established over them it (namely, the United States) was not seeking to promote any peculiar object of its own. What it did, and all that it did, was done openly in the face of day, in entire good faith, and known to all nations. * * * This Government still desires to see the nationality of the Hawaiian Government maintained, its independent administration of public affairs respected, and its prosperity and reputation increased. But while thus indisposed to exercise sinister influence itself over the councils of Hawaii, or to overawe the proceedings of its government by the menace or the actual application of superior military force, it expects to see other powerful nations act in the same manner.

In 1851 President Fillmore declared:

The islands should not pass under the control of any great maritime state, but should remain in an independent condition, and so be accessible and useful to the commerce of all nations.

Mr. Blaine wrote on November 19, 1881:

The Government of the United States has, with unvarying consistency, manifested respect for the independence of the Hawaiian Kingdom and an earnest desire for the welfare of its people. * * * The Government of the United States has always avowed, and now repeats, that under no circumstances will it permit the transfer of the territory or sovereignty to any of the great European powers.

In 1887 Secretary Bayard said to our Minister Merrill:

As is well known, no intent is cherished or policy entertained by the United States which is otherwise than friendly to the autonomous control and independence of Hawaii.

James A. Garfield declared:

Hawaiian annexation would weaken the power of our people and Government.

In this unbroken chain of opinion there is not one word which suggests annexation. "Hands off all round" has been our consistent policy in the past, and autonomy ought to be our plan in the future.

The conduct of the friends of annexation has been somewhat reprehensible. Not content with importing the President of a sister Republic to awe this Legislature, not long ago they brought into this Chamber a map of the Pacific Ocean. This confronted us day after day like a threatening cloud. On their map they painted lurid streaks "that did the multitudinous sea incarnadine"—streaks that burnt into the retina a bloodshot vision not to be dispelled. But this day and night mare has not been without its uses. How edifying to watch lines scurrying from all over the globe, concentrating irresistibly on this magnetic speck

in midocean! The shooting star of empire at last has found a resting place. And then these converging lines form a web which recalls our happy childhood and the recitation:

"Will you walk into my parlor?"
Said the spider to the fly;
"'Tis the prettiest little parlor
That ever you did spy."

And what a walk it is! Hawaii is farther from anywhere else than any other spot on earth. Falkland is 6,379 miles away; the Nicaragua Canal, 4,210; Auckland, 3,350; Sitka, 2,395; while Japan, our rival for the Hawaiian hand, is in the seductive proximity of 3,399 miles.

But it seems that it is distance that lends enchantment to the strategic eye. From the Washington Post of December 10, 1897, I quote:

There are few men in the country as well qualified to speak in regard to Hawaiian matters as Lient. Col. Charles P. Egan, United States Army, one of the most accomplished gentlemen in Uncle Sam's service. Speaking with friends at the Ebbitt yesterday, Colonel Egan said: "Now is the golden opportunity of the United States to annex Hawaii. The time may never be so favorable again if we let the present chance pass. The argument that the country is too far away is absurd; in fact, the distance is rather an advantage. It will give an opening for our ships of war and will be an additional reason for the upbuilding of our Navy."

Other Army and Navy officers have expressed themselves in the same strain. It is natural they should do so. On any proposition looking toward an increase of either branch of the service their answer is ready-made. I do not accept professional soldiers as my guides in public policy. It is true we are a fighting people—our graveyards attest it. But we are not a belligerent power. May Heaven preserve us from such a fate. What makes England great is her formidable navy. What has made us great in the past is the absence of heavy armaments. It is the one undisputed advantage that we have over all civilized nations. Thomas Jefferson does not agree with Colonel Egan in the doctrine of dispersal. He wrote to President Monroe, in 1809, touching the proposed annexation of Cuba:

It will be objected to our receiving Cuba that no limit can be drawn to our future acquisitions. Cuba can be defended by us without a navy; and this develops the principle which ought to limit our views. Nothing should ever be accepted which would require a navy to defend it.

Secretary Frelinghuysen wrote to Mr. Langston under date of June 20, 1833:

The policy of this Government, as declared on many occasions in the past, has tended toward avoidance of possessions disconnected from the main continent.

In 1881 he said to the same minister:

A conviction that a fixed policy, dating back to the origin of our constitutional Government, was considered to make it inexpedient to attempt territorial aggrandizement which would require maintenance by a naval force in excess of any yet provided for our national uses, has led this Government to decline territorial acquisitions. Even as simple coaling stations such territorial acquisitions would involve responsibilities beyond their utility. The United States has never deemed it needful to their national life to maintain impregnable fortresses along the world's highways of commerce.

William E. Gladstone writes of the destiny of this Republic in his *Kin Beyond the Seas*:

The United States has the natural base of the greatest continuous empire that has ever been established by man, and the distinction between a continuous empire and one dispersed over the sea is vital. America will probably become what we are now, the head servant in the great household of the world, because her service will be most and the ablest; for the growth in one century from 3,000,000 to 65,000,000 encourages the belief that in 1990 America will have 500,000,000 of people.

On the subject of naval expansion I quote from an able paper written by M. S. Stuyvesant, of St. Louis:

I do not believe that we need what is known as "sea power" for use outside of our own waters. To put it in another way, we will not have to keep pace with England and the continental powers in this expensive matter of building battle ships if our coasts are impregnable, because —

1. We have no foreign colonies to defend.
2. We are not in the business of appropriating the lands of defenseless people and have no "zones of influence" to squabble over.
3. We have no coaling stations scattered all over the world to fortify and maintain connection with.
4. Our chances of having to go to war would be materially lessened. No nation would be anxious to quarrel with us if they could not hurt us. We can safely leave the struggle for preponderant sea power to other nations less fortunately situated, if only our coast defenses are in condition to repel attack.

On the strategic advantages of Hawaii Capt A. T. Mahan has been appealed to and has dutifully come to the front. He says:

Too much stress can not be laid on the immense disadvantage to us of any maritime enemy having a coaling station well within 2,500 miles, as this is, of every point of our coast line from Puget Sound to Mexico. Were there many others available we might find it difficult to exclude them all. There is, however, but one. Shut out from the Sandwich Islands as a coal base, an enemy is thrown back for supplies of fuel to distances of 3,500 or 4,000 miles, or between 7,000 and 8,000 miles going and coming, an impediment to sustained

maritime operations well nigh prohibitive. * * * It is rarely that so important a factor in the attack or defense of a coast line—of a sea frontier—is concentrated in a single position, and this circumstance renders it doubly imperative upon us to secure it if we righteously can.

According to Captain Mahan, with these islands in our possession a navy seeking to attack our coast would have to steam some 7,000 miles without recoaling. He speaks of an enemy being thus thrown back for supplies. What possible enemies have we to encounter in the Pacific? There are but two—England and Japan. Frowning over our frontier, near the southern extremity of Vancouver Island, is the first-class naval arsenal of Esquimaunt. With this and her master navy England is indifferent as to whether we hold Hawaii or not. The Japanese are a long-headed people. They are not given to running on quixotic errands. They do not dream of attacking our Pacific coast. If they ever attempt it, their ships would have no need of recoaling on the return trip.

Captain Mahan's opinion and my crude notions of strategy do not agree. I have always understood that in war the more one spreads out the more one is weakened, the more one concentrates the more one is strengthened. The advocates of annexation constantly refer to Hawaii as an outpost. An outpost is a detachment from the main body thrown forward for purposes of observation, retreating and reenforcing the main body when occasion requires. In the event of war Hawaii could not fall back, it could not fall forward, and it would refuse to sink into the sea. It would have to be defended by fortifications and guarded by a fleet.

It is but fair to admit that Hawaii has its attractive features, its allurements. To the world-stroller it offers a blissful sojourn—a life with something of the Garden of Eden about it—plenty of leisure and few clothes. Here the traveler breathes the fragrance of flowers, regales himself on rich fruits, and revels in the ever-tepid sea. When the sensuous palls upon him, there is subject for moralizing. He can climb Mount Kilauea, peep into its crater, which does the most active business on the islands, and ponder over the possibilities of the future.

At nightfall he seeks the shelter of the lanai, a shed with live trees for posts and interwoven palm leaves for a roof. Here, seated on the grass, his neck encircled with a lei, a wreath of

flowers, he joins in the luau, a native banquet. The food is served on leaves of aromatic plants by way of tablecloth. With his fingers he dips poi out of a calabash. He partakes of sucking pig, roasted in a imu, an underground oven. He devours raw fish, live shrimps, yams, and watermelon, washing the whole down with copious draughts of awa, the alcoholic beverage of Polynesia. Satiated, with a parting aloha, he retires to some opening among the palm trees and takes a moonshine bath, meanwhile conning the Kanaka, if he is an American with aspirations, knowing that an acquaintance with that dialect will be a requirement in the next catechism of the Civil Service Commission.

Uncle Sam may long for relaxation of this kind; but, after all, he will be wise to imitate the sage Ulysses. As he approached the island of the Sirens, whose song was death Ulysses filled his sailors' ears with beeswax to dull their hearing and had himself bound to the mast for fear that he might weaken. Then, signaling his men to bend to their oars, he swiftly fled the dangerous coast.

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